



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
MIKE STRAIN DVM
COMMISSIONER



July 12, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

re: GN Docket 11-65

As you may know, Louisiana is as eclectic an arrangement of cultures, environments, realms of business and life as exists in our country and the entire world. Agriculture is markedly pervasive in the spirit of Louisiana: our bayous, farmland, coastline, rivers and forests play home to countless remarkable species of flora and fauna and exceptional and unique ways of life.

One can itemize the economic value of our forests and our agricultural endeavors in terms of money (about \$10 billion annually), but the truth is that Louisiana agriculture and forestry are priceless in their contributions to our way of life, both at the present and in terms of prospects for the future. As Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, I am charged with overseeing the regulatory and programmatic functions our department engages in, and the proposed merger between AT&T and T-Mobile has me particularly enthusiastic about the potential for development and growth for Louisiana in these sectors.

The proposed merger extends access to 4G LTE technologies to 55 million Americans who do not currently enjoy high-speed transfer of information; the prospect of connecting thousands of rural Louisianians—many of them active in agriculture—is incredibly appealing. Timing is everything in farming, and quicker access means better production. A farmer in Morgan City can log expected weather patterns while a rancher in Calhoun would have easy access to the latest livestock market prices, and both would have the opportunity to interact with the global marketplace at a level previously unimaginable. Having our farmers plugged in through expanded broadband capabilities will move this state forward.

One of the anticipated derivatives of the merger is a frenzy of innovation, and the potential for agricultural-related innovation is boundless. Education and public awareness are among our most important functions; we can foresee portals for agri-educational programs accessible on devices in rural classrooms and informative materials readily available for download or perusal remotely. New applications are developed every day for mobile technologies, and applications already exist for weather needs, ordering farm equipment, and dairy inventories. It is only a matter of time before “there’s an app” for water and soil conservation, crop sales and livestock trading. Continued scientific development and research in our state may give rise to even more new platforms and applications.

Chairman Genachowski

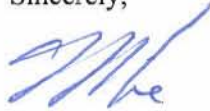
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Safety and quarantine of dangerous species may also be aided by increased broadband access. You may not know that, in 2005, swarms of Africanized Honey Bees were found near Shreveport. The department maintains vigilance over known swarms of these pests and is also charged with the quarantine of Formosan termites and boll weevils and the regulation of eradication of plant pests from products. Quicker access to breaking news and developments regarding these pests would drastically aid in this regard. Recreation and tourism would also be positively affected. Visitors from all walks of life could feel free to vacation in our parks and forests without worrying about missing an important call or email, and staff and security personnel can more effectively maintain safety for our tourists.

I appreciate your consideration of my comments during your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Strain".

Mike Strain DVM
Commissioner

MS:sw